

Story #387 (Tape #3, 1972)

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The Black Sheep and Ahmet Ağa's Daughter

In the summertime the rich agas of the village used to send their sheep, cattle, and other livestock to the rich pastures nearby. Among them was a certain Ahmet Ağa who was one of the richest. He was in the habit of taking his herds to the same pastures every year.

His daughter Ayşe was very beautiful, and all the men in the village, young and old, were in love with her. In order to win Ayşe's heart, the young men used to come and boast to her of their heroic deeds: "I killed so many lions and so many wolves," they would say. However, Ayşe would not pay any attention to them; she seemed to favor none of them.

One day the young men got together with the purpose of discussing Ayşe's lack of interest in them. They accused her of being insensitive to love and nicknamed her "Insensitive Ayşe."

One day at dawn Ayşe came to her father and said, "Father, <sup>there</sup> robbers are in the process of stealing our animals. You must do something about it."

Ahmet Ağa got his men together, and they went to the pastures. They succeeded in capturing the robbers. Ahmet Ağa was curious. He asked, "Ayşe, how did you find out about the robbery so early in the morning?"

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"The <sup>16-18</sup>shepherd informed me about it with his <sup>musical</sup>pipe," Ayşe replied.

Ahmet Ağa asked again, "How did he do it? What did he say?"

"The tune coming out of his pipe said that our flocks had been attacked by robbers, and he needed instant help," Ayşe explained.

Ahmet Ağa became suspicious and asked, "How could you interpret the message?"

Ayşe said, "There is communication between hearts."

Then Ahmet Ağa called the shepherd and questioned him, "Are you in love with my daughter?"

"Yes, sir," the shepherd answered.

It hurt Ahmet Ağa's pride that a base shepherd should love his daughter, and he decided to have him killed. He summoned the other agas to a conference. They decided, "Let us put the shepherd to trial. We shall be justified in chopping his head off if he fails the test."

These were the conditions of the trial. The shepherd was supposed to take a flock of lambs and sheep to a very dry and salty pasture and

them graze for three days and three nights. Then he was to lead

flock with his pipe to a watering place. He was to play his pipe in such a way that the flock would be dissuaded from drinking any water.

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<sup>1</sup>Here Ayşe uses an idiomatic expression which is difficult to translate. Literally, it means, "There are roads (passages of understanding) between hearts." It suggests that when two persons love each other, they can read one another's mind---through telepathy, perhaps.

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The shepherd was put to trial on a burning hot August day. After the flock grazed at the pasture with salty soil for three days and three nights, he herded the flock to the watering place. Then he started playing his pipe. The tune coming from the pipe begged the sheep not to drink any water from the spring. "Oh, my sheep, my sweet sheep, please don't drink any of the water. If you do, lose my head. Then you will all be butchered. My Ayşe will become blind from crying of grief," it said.

Two parties of men were formed by the spring: the shepherd and those who did not like him. waiting with a sword in his hand.

herd's head as soon as one of the sheep started drinking the water.

All the sheep turned away from the water without drinking it. A black sheep came along last, and just as it started drinking the water the shepherd began playing a tune: "Dear black sheep, don't you drink the water. If you do, first I'll lose my head, then you'll lose yours I took care of you when you were born. When you had lambs I took care of them too.

Those who loved the shepherd were begging the black sheep not to drink the water. Those who did not like the shepherd encouraged the black sheep to drink the water: "Come on, black sheep. Drink the water. If you drink it, we promise to put gold bells around your neck." The two parties began competing with each other. discouraged the sheep from drinking the water; the other encouraged

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it to drink the water.

The shepherd began playing his pipe again: "Dear black sheep, please don't drink the water. If you do, first I'll lose my head, then you'll lose yours." Finally the black sheep went away from the water without drinking it. The victory was the shepherd's.

Then the men gathered around the shepherd and began questioning him: "We know you won the heart of the black sheep with the tune of your pipe. Why is it that the animal did not drink the water?"

The shepherd explained, "Gentlemen, on beautiful moonlit nights when Ayşe and I were talking of our <sup>Love, & crew</sup> love, my lips were burning with desire as the black sheep's lips were burning with thirst. But I never touched Ayşe. If I had kissed and violated her, the black sheep would have drunk the water. I owe this victory to my patience and suffering. It is why Ayşe and I are still together."

The shepherd wedded Ayşe. His strong will power won him a beautiful wife and a victory fit for a king.

<sup>2</sup>It would be quite unlikely that a girl in a Turkish village would meet any lover at night. To have admitted such an assignation, even if the girl were still a virgin, would have brought severe punishment and would have eliminated all chance of marriage between the two. In a moralistic fantasy, however, where men talk with sheep, this unlikely element is less noticeable than it would be in an otherwise realistic tale.